

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

**NOTICE OF PENALTIES INCURRED AND DUE
FOR VIOLATIONS OF LAWS AND RULES**

PENALTY ASSESSMENT: DG-190627
PENALTY AMOUNT: \$2,000
Investigation # 7981

UBI: 604-183-860
Phone: (800) 658-7601

Transblue, LLC
4320 196th St. SW B137
Lynnwood, WA 98036

The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission) believes that you have violated Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 19.122.030(2) by failing to provide the required notice to facility operators through a one-number locator service before excavating. RCW 19.122.055 states, in part, that any excavator who fails to notify a one-number locator service and causes damage to an underground hazardous liquid or gas facility is subject to a civil penalty of not more than \$10,000 for each violation.

Commission staff (Staff) conducted an investigation that included reviewing damage reports submitted by Puget Sound Energy (PSE) that identified natural gas damage events involving Transblue, LLC (Transblue or Company). Accordingly, the Commission hereby notifies you that it is assessing a penalty against you for \$2,000 on the following grounds:

(First Violation)

On June 19, 2018, Transblue struck and damaged a natural gas line operated by PSE while excavating at 7518 12th Ave. NW, Seattle, Washington. Transblue did not request a dig ticket from a one-number locator service to locate underground utilities before excavating. On July 26, 2018, PSE submitted a Damage Incident Reporting Tool (DIRT) report identifying the Company as the party responsible for damaging the natural gas service line. Staff was unable to find a valid dig ticket for Transblue at this location on this date.

The Commission mailed an Alleged Violation of Washington Dig Law letter to the Company on September 21, 2018, that included detailed information about the requirements of Washington state's underground utility damage prevention act and the possibility of penalties for each violation.

(Second Violation)

On February 27, 2019, Transblue struck and damaged PSE's underground gas line while excavating during building construction at 7542 1st Ave. NE, Seattle, Washington. Before beginning excavation, Transblue failed to request a dig ticket from a one-number locator service to locate underground utilities. On April 6, 2019, PSE submitted a DIRT report identifying the Company as the party responsible for damaging the natural gas service line. Staff was unable to find a valid dig ticket for the Company at this location on this date.

Staff recommends the Commission assess a \$2,000 penalty against Transblue for two violations of RCW 19.122 for failing to provide the required notice to a one-number locator service before excavating, as follows:

- \$1,000 penalty for the violation of RCW 19.122.030(2) that occurred on June 19, 2018; and
- \$1,000 penalty for the violation of RCW 19.122.030(2) that occurred on February 27, 2019.

Staff's research indicates that Transblue has submitted 31 requests to locate underground utilities since January 1, 2018. The Commission is aware of two underground utility damage incidents caused by Transblue, both of which occurred because Transblue failed to submit a utility locate request before excavating. After considering all of the circumstances, Staff recommends that the Commission offer to suspend \$1,500 of the \$2,000 penalty amount for a period of one year, subject to the conditions that: (1) the Company incurs no further violations of RCW 19.122 within 12 months of the date of this Notice; and (2) Company management and field crew responsible for excavation complete Dig Safe Training provided through the National Utility Contractors Association (NUCA) within 12 months of the date of this Notice.

The Commission agrees with Staff's recommendation and assesses a penalty of \$2,000 with an offer to suspend, and ultimately waive, \$1,500 of the \$2,000 penalty amount subject to the conditions listed above. If the Company fails to comply with the conditions, the \$1,500 suspended penalty will become immediately due and payable, in addition to any new penalties that the Commission may assess for additional violations.

These facts, if not contested or if proved at a hearing and not rebutted or explained, are sufficient to support the penalty assessment.

Your penalty is due and payable now. If you believe either or both of the violations did not occur, you may deny committing the violation(s) and contest the penalty through evidence presented at a hearing or in writing. Or, if there is a reason for either or both of the violations that you believe should excuse you from the penalty, you may ask for mitigation (reduction) of the penalty through evidence presented at a hearing or in writing. The Commission will grant a request for hearing only if material issues of law or fact require consideration of evidence and resolution in a hearing. Any request to contest the violations or for mitigation of the penalty must include a written statement of the reasons supporting that request. Failure to provide such a statement will result in denial of the request. *See* RCW 81.04.405.

If you properly present your request for a hearing and the Commission grants that request, the Commission will review the evidence supporting your dispute of the violations or application for mitigation in a Brief Adjudicative Proceeding before an administrative law judge. The administrative law judge will consider the evidence and will notify you of his or her decision.

You must act within 15 days after receiving this notice to do one of the following:

- Pay the \$2,000 penalty amount due; or

- Pay \$500 of the penalty amount and notify the Commission that you accept the offer to suspend, and ultimately waive, \$1,500 of the \$2,000 penalty amount subject to the following conditions:
 - Transblue field crew responsible for excavation, including management, attend Dig Safe training provided through NUCA within twelve (12) months of the date of this Notice; and
 - **Submit documentation of attendance to the Commission within five (5) days of attending the training;** and
 - Transblue commits no further violations of RCW 19.122 within 12 months of the date of this Notice; or
- Request a hearing to contest the occurrence of the violations; or
- Request mitigation to reduce the amount of the penalty.

Please indicate your selection on the enclosed form and send it to the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission, P.O. Box 47250, Olympia, Washington 98504-7250, **within FIFTEEN (15) days** after you receive this notice.

If you do not act within 15 days, the Commission may refer this matter to the Office of the Attorney General for collection. The Commission may then sue you to collect the penalty.

DATED at Lacey, Washington, and effective August 14, 2019.

/s/ Rayne Pearson
RAYNE PEARSON
Director, Administrative Law Division

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
PENALTY ASSESSMENT DG-190627, Investigation # 7981

PLEASE NOTE: You must complete and sign this document, and send it to the Commission within 15 days after you receive the penalty assessment. Use additional paper if needed.

I have read and understand RCW 9A.72.020 (printed below), which states that making false statements under oath is a class B felony. I am over the age of 18, am competent to testify to the matters set forth below and I have personal knowledge of those matters. I hereby make, under oath, the following statements:

1. **Payment of penalty.** I admit that the violations occurred and enclose \$2,000 in payment of the penalty.

2. **Accept conditions.** I admit that the violations occurred, enclose \$500 in payment, and accept the Commission's offer to suspend, and ultimately waive, \$1,500 of the \$2,000 penalty amount subject to the following conditions:

- Transblue employees, including ownership and field crew involved in excavations, attend Dig Safe training provided through NUCA within twelve (12) months of this Notice; and
- Submit documentation of that attendance to the Commission **within five (5) days** of attending the training; and
- Transblue commits no further violations of RCW 19.122 within twelve (12) months of the date of this Notice.

3. **Contest the violations.** I believe that the alleged violation(s) did not occur for the reasons I describe below (**if you do not include reasons supporting your contest here, your request will be denied**):

a) I ask for a hearing to present evidence on the information I provide above to an administrative law judge for a decision.

OR b) I ask for a Commission decision based solely on the information I provide above.

4. **Request mitigation.** I admit the violations, but I believe that the penalty should be reduced for the reasons set out below (**if you do not include reasons supporting your application here, your request will be denied**):

a) I ask for a hearing to present evidence on the information I provide above to an administrative law judge for a decision.

OR b) I ask for a Commission decision based solely on the information I provide above.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of Washington that the foregoing, including information I have presented on any attachments, is true and correct.

Dated: _____ [Month/Day/Year], at _____ [City, State]

Name of Respondent (Company) – please print

Signature of Applicant

RCW 9A.72.020:

“Perjury in the first degree. (1) A person is guilty of perjury in the first degree if in any official proceeding he makes a materially false statement which he knows to be false under an oath required or authorized by law. (2) Knowledge of the materiality of the statement is not an element of this crime, and the actor’s mistaken belief that his statement was not material is not a defense to a prosecution under this section. (3) Perjury in the first degree is a class B felony.”